



## NEWSLETTER · July 2011

# From the Coordinator

Dear Friends,

In recent times we have seen great turbulence and natural disasters world wide. The floods and Cyclones in Queensland, floods in Victoria and fires in Western Australia have been devastating. The natural disasters in Christchurch NZ, Japan, earthquakes and tsunami, and in China last year and in Chile, South America, these events create an unsettling feeling amongst many. Indeed I hear people saying "What is happening?" Why is it happening?" "Will it happen here in Sydney?" .....and no answer really satisfies the quest to understand nor takes away the feelings of unease. Indeed we are glad to hear that our Marist friends in NZ are well and didn't suffer too greatly from the recent devastation. These times remind us of how small we are on the planet we inhabit, how vulnerable we are as beings on the planet and how life experiences are often out of our control. They also give witness to great generosity of spirit by neighbours and volunteers, great works of charity by organisations and business and draws the nation's attention to the real matters that affect people's lives.

I have found it interesting that all these unexpected changes and challenges have paralleled a time of great change in my own life. Last March I left my role as principal in a local catholic school in Sydney to take up a new role in Catholic Community Services. This new role will focus on mission and pastoral care within the organisation and I know will present many challenges, but also a great deal of satisfaction as I assist the leadership team in moving the organisation forward. This change in my career was quite unexpected and I know that it has occurred for a reason, which maybe more fully realised as time unfolds.

Importantly though whilst balancing the role of beginning the school year, embracing the families, staff and students and preparing to leave the school in shape from an administrative, educational, financial and staffing viewpoint I was delighted to be accompanied by Mary. A strange comment...perhaps so! It was during the clean out of my office that I found this beautiful picture of Our Lady of the Way. It made its way into my diary and I was really awe struck that this should be so.

In my family home this picture had hung in the hallway throughout my entire life. As a child I was always struck by the beauty of the woman and child and reminded constantly of how Mary was just a girl holding hopes and dreams for her child, like all mothers do, yet in her face is a trusting, acceptance of all that

is to come. I couldn't help but be moved that this picture should accompany me as I leave 35 years of education to take up a new role in the Catholic Community Services. It struck me that as Mary in this picture nurtures the life of Christ so too over my time in education I have endeavoured to nurture the life, gifts and talents of students, families and staff I've had the privilege to work with. What a gift! I also reflected upon the fact that as the picture is called "Our Lady of the Way" so too, I was needing to trust as I find a new "way" to be in the work place, a new 'way' forward which will lift me out of my comfort zone and into the unknown. I felt reassured that Mary was accompanying me on 'the way'. She has already lived a time of huge change, of unknown expectations, of devastation and darkness with only hope to comfort her, so too I am invited to do the same.

I reflect that at this time of enormous global challenges, as nature unleashes its power upon us, that we like Mary, have to hold on to and nourish the life that comes within our embrace no matter what the situation or pain. So my dear friends in Mary as we put forward our edition for Marist Laity Australia I pray that you will continue to reflect the spirit of Mary embracing, nurturing and celebrating life as the God-given gift that it is.

Let us continue to keep in our prayers all those caught up in any of the areas of devastation throughout the world, especially those we know and love.

Yours in Mary,

**Margaret Woods.**  
MLA Coordinator



# Mary in the midst of chaos

By Andrew Dumas

On Saturday June 3rd 33 people gathered for our reflection day on "Mary in the Midst of Chaos" at St Patrick's Church Hill. Marist Brother Graham Neist ran the day. Graham started the day in conversation by inviting each person to talk with each other about our own lives and the presence of chaos in them. We quickly realized that chaos is a natural part of a daily rhythm as human beings. Where Mary appears in the Gospel's we often find her living with Chaos. When Mary is pregnant, Jesus' birth, or when Jesus was a teenager lost in the temple. However, Graham made a good point that people tend to run away or dislike Chaos. Graham suggested when asking a young person, "describe a holy person", a young person would respond, "A holy person is a nun, who lives on a hill, out of town". People tend to disassociate Holy from their daily living. However, Graham made the point that in the midst of our daily living we encounter God the most. Not in some foreign concept outside of our world, but rather, God is present in the moment to moment of our day - in all of it's messyness. Our messyness makes things holy. As Graham spoke these words a man from outside ran into our room, grabbed our donation money and ran out. We were left a bewildered, wondering what had just happened. Anger arose in some. Fear of our security in others. But later in the day, we were too prayed for this man. Realising he needed the money more than we did.

We were blessed on the day as we had many new people attend from neighbouring parishes who had seen the advertisement in the local church bulletins. Such as from Ryde and Denistone. Thank you to those parishes who advertised. Men, women, single, married and religious. It was wonderful to have such a diverse range of people.

Overall, Graham provided each of us with a down to earth encounter with our own life. The need for both "order" and "chaos". We finished the day by reflecting on some "wisdom" literature .....

## Time to Play

A busy executive was speaking to her six year old niece at the end of a particularly frustrating day. She'd spend the better part of the day trying to get a new printer installed. Nothing has worked, and she was exhausted and very frustrated.

On the phone with her young niece, she described in general terms how frustrated she was.

Her niece asked, "Did you try hard?"

"Yes", she replied.

"Did you try really, really hard?"

"Yes I did".

"Well then", said the six year old, "now it's time to go out and play!"

Thank you Graham for providing us for refreshing encounter with God living in us.

For more information and the audio of "Mary in the Midst of Chaos" go to <http://www.maristlaityaustralia.com>





# FOURVIERE Mass

Saturday 23 July, 2pm  
Villa Maria Parish Hall  
Mary St, Hunters Hill

Followed by  
afternoon tea.

*All welcome to  
celebrate the gift  
of being Marist!*



# Interview

with Shelagh  
Goonawardene



**By Maria Baden**

M. We're here in Shelagh's house in Melbourne. Shelagh came originally from Sri Lanka to live in Australia. She's a Marist and has agreed to share her story with us.

S. Thank you for visiting Maria.

M. How did it all begin? How did you start getting involved with the Marists?

S. Well, as a migrant, when you go to your new parish church, you feel rather on the outside of it for quite a while. I wanted, you know, to get into the inside, to be accepted. I happened to see a notice where a Marist Sister, Sr Marie Clark, was having a combination of a seminar and presentation and I liked the idea of that and I attended it. That was in August 1995. It was so good, so interesting, because we had to think about the life of Mary and the scenes of her life with Jesus and respond to what her feelings might have been at various events and how we ourselves would respond, or could identify with some of those feelings and what questions we might want to ask. This led to exploring Mary's state of mind and that brought us so much closer to her and so, that took hold because we could also then explore our own feelings. That's how it all began. I continued attending all the Marist meetings after that. I used to look forward to them.

M. So, in your introduction to Marists, it was really, well, not an introduction to Mary but, perhaps, a new way of relating to Mary. And this came about through Sr Marie Clark?

S. That's right.

M. Shelagh, the Sisters have now gone and the Marist Laity group to which you belonged has also come to an end. That's one of the

reasons why I'm interviewing the lay Marists here in Melbourne, because there's no formal group as such. Can I ask you, do you still feel you're a lay Marist, and if so, why?

S. Oh! Very much so because once you start getting to know Mary, you want to know more and more and if you bring her into almost everything that you do and when you read much more widely about her and you think far more the Rosary and its importance in prayer life. Also, Mary's appearances, you know, especially Fatima, because that's very important to the world and it's important for us as Marists to follow her directions in regard to what she wants us to do. So I say some of the prayers that were revealed at Fatima and I think the First Friday Devotion, and all that, is important. We have to convince other Catholics about those things, because many people who have heard of Fatima may not know the details about it.

M. Fatima, Lourdes and in more recent times, other appearances. I suppose these give faith and hope. You know our world is a pretty broken place.

S. Yes! And you get the feeling that Mary is constantly begging God for more time for us to be converted. In fact, I've made a Marian pilgrimage as well, and so it means as you know, going deeper and deeper into the mystery. But also the familiarity, like for instance, when my daughter was so ill, finally dying, I could appreciate what Mary felt when she stood at the foot of the Cross and supported her Son through the terrible crucifixion. She didn't collapse in a heap, so to speak, when she could easily have been excused for doing so. I mean, she really cooperated with him in bringing about the redemption of humanity and I can well believe (although it is not recorded) that the first person Jesus must have visited after his Resurrection was Mary. Because of my time with the Marists, I wrote this poem on His first miracle at Cana because that began His public life. It was Mary who asked him, and who simply trusted and waited and told the servants "do whatever he tells you."

M. She's telling us too.

S. Exactly, so that first miracle is very significant. It was almost as if Jesus was not quite ready to start his public life but at the instigation of Mary and her realisation of the acute embarrassment of the bride's family because the wine was running short, Jesus responded.

M. I'm glad you wrote that poem. That's one of my favourite episodes in the Gospel. Well, Shelagh, what difference, if any, has it made to you, this Marist spirit? Has it made a difference to your life?

S. Oh, a tremendous difference! In fact, last year I was in touch with a group called "Australia Needs Fatima", and they sent me a prayer of consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. So it keeps on growing.

M. So those early roots of the work of the Marist Sisters, passed on that spirituality. I think it's very important to know that the lay Marists embrace that spirituality on their own and we are just as accessible to Mary as the Religious. Mary was a lay person, mother and wife.

S. She was the first disciple - a contemplative, so she is always urging us to do the same.

M. The idea is not to stop with Mary but to bring us intimately to her Son.

# Joyous Event at Hunters Hill

## Commissioning of Lay Marists

The Vigil mass on Saturday December 4th last year was indeed an extraordinary event for all present and in particular for 16 members of the Hunters Hill Marist laity group who made their formal commitment as Lay Marists. The privileged few were: Jennifer Aduckiewiez, Josephine Aul, Lynette Byatt, Judith Craig, Josiane Espinosa, Cathy Gallo, Marcia Hale, Valerie Grant, Janet Muscat, Jim O'Neill, Valda Rec, Marguerite Robinson, Agnes Sivaram, Cathie Teale, Mark Trainor and Margaret Wills.

In his welcome to the Lay Marists, the other members of the religious community and the parishioners, Father Kevin Bates exalted the role of Lay Marists in the parish and the Church at large.

After the prayers of the faithful, each candidate was presented with a certificate and a symbolic candle by Margie Woods, co-ordinator of Marist Laity, Australia.

Committing to being a Lay Marist is a humbling and honoured experience. Recognising the guidance of our Heavenly Mother Mary, getting to know her fathomless faith and her approach to life, allowing her gentle influence to soothe us and furthering her work in our modern day-to-day lives are the principles by which the group strives to live.

To have commemorated this occasion in the parish of Hunters Hill, at Villa Maria church, which had been entrusted to the Marist Fathers at its inception well back in the nineteenth century gave us even more reason for celebration. The memorable mass of December 4 and convivial gathering at supper afterwards marked the event most fittingly.

The Lay Marists offer their sincere thanks to Father Kevin and everyone who made this ceremony possible. We are especially indebted to the Executive team of Marist Laity, Australia and to Maria Badden.

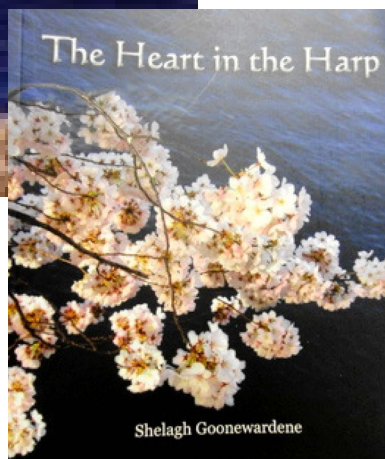
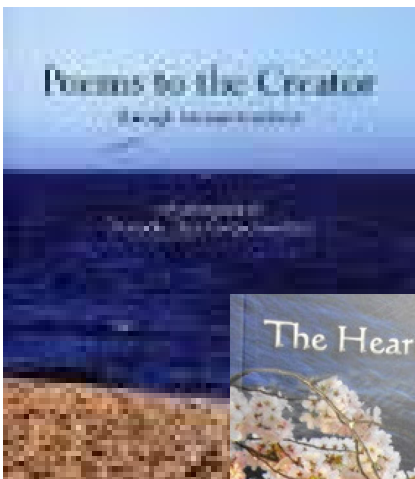


S. She's always leading us to Jesus, and one wants to get to know as much as you possibly can about Jesus and the Holy Trinity. Reading the bible becomes a real quest for Jesus. One reads with new eyes and sees much more deeply than in the past. When I hear certain passages being read, I think, well, I know these, but then pondering and reflecting on them further and I see depths that escaped me before. Being a Marist has made the difference.

M. You write poems Shelagh, and some of them I've read are deeply moving. Do you think that your Marist spirituality has helped this creativity?

S. Oh yes. When I was diagnosed with cancer I couldn't write poetry. I had not attempted it before except for one or two attempts at school. But as I progressed with the cancer treatment I started spontaneously to write poems. It's been such a good way of communicating with people because I feel that I am making some contribution by articulating feelings and emotions which are universal to all human beings. I thought that perhaps I could help people who felt joy, sorrow and so much else but couldn't articulate these feelings. When one goes through difficult times there was also the lesson to learn, to take joy in small things wrought by Nature which one doesn't pay so much attention to when a person is leading a normal and busy life. Technology and all its devices today take us away from looking at nature carefully. It was with cancer that I really started appreciating tiny things in my garden. You begin noticing things you've never noticed before, and that's why my book is called "Poems to the Creator", because all that comes to us from the Creator.

M. Thank you very much Shelagh. you have a wonderful Marist spirit and you have certainly enriched people's lives through your faith and through your poetry. Thank you for sharing your inspiring story.



# Drowning

## in a sea of SORROW



Activist Maria Tiimon and her father.

**The Hungry Tide focuses on those islanders suffering on the front line of climate change, writes Tim Elliott.**

High tide is a bad tide in the village of Tebekenikoora, in the low-lying Pacific island nation of Kiribati. As the water rises, the waves slosh over the makeshift seawall, seeping through the village, up the crushed-coral streets and into the houses, taking anything that isn't battened down. "It's a wasteland," says the local school teacher, Aberi Iota Tabaka, who has moved his house to avoid the water. Every high tide, Tabaka's school room gets flooded. Tebekenikoora isn't so much the frontline in the war on climate change as a seemingly doomed outpost. It also provides some of the most affecting footage in Tom Zubrycki's new film, *The Hungry Tide*, an important documentary that explores the plight of Kiribati and one woman's battle to save it. "I wanted to put a human face to climate change," Zubrycki says "And I wanted people to see a representation of the issues confronting a place that most seem to have forgotten about."

Straddling the equator in the central Pacific, Kiribati (pronounced "Kiribas") is home to 110,000 people across 33 atolls. Most live just two metres above sea level, making them particularly vulnerable to the climate change-induced rise of the sea level. As Zubrycki's film demonstrates, moderate rises have devastated the islands, chewing up coastal roads, contaminating wells and sweeping away crop lands. "Kiribati is really the canary in the coalmine," he says. "It will disappear if change doesn't come." Zubrycki's protagonist is Maria Tiimon, a shy, middle-aged Kiribati woman who now lives in Sydney.

As the Pacific outreach officer for a Catholic advocacy group called the Edmund Rice Centre, it's Tiimon's job to alert the world to the plight of her homeland. The film follows Tiimon as she holds workshops with schools and community groups, catering both to her work and the needs of her extended family - or "Noah's Ark", as she calls them - who still live back in Kiribati. "You have to understand how tiny Kiribati is," she says. "Most of the islands, when you stand in the middle, you can see both sides: you can hear the waves breaking on both sides at once. With the

erosion, many of the people are moving inland from the coastal areas but there's nowhere to go to."

Tiimon's family and work make up the twin strands of Zubrycki's film, providing alternate perspectives on climate change's grim reality. Travelling home to visit the family following the death of her mother, for instance, Tiimon consults her ailing father. "It causes us great sadness when we notice the tides encroaching on our land more and more each year," he says. "It's our belief that it's all due to the white man's advanced knowledge. Us brown people, our knowledge has also increased but our knowledge has not destroyed anything."

For Maria, then, climate change becomes less an environmental issue than a human-rights issue - a problem of justice. "Industrial countries are causing change in the climate," she says, "and we are the first to feel the consequences."

This is the message she takes to the climate-change conference in Copenhagen, where the Kiribati delegation battles to be heard among the gabfest. Tiimon and her team give their talks and perform their dances; they show a short film and brief the journalists but it quickly becomes apparent her people are drowning not only in seawater but in global indifference.

Indeed, watching Tiimon and the delegation being ground to dust by the wheels of international diplomacy is one of the more moving parts of the film; at one stage the teary, shocked-looking Kiribatis watch on as a group of young protesters are bundled on to a bus by security forces, each group no doubt empathising with the powerlessness of the other.

After failing to agree to stabilise emissions - thanks in part to Australia, which pressured neighbouring island Tuvalu to withdraw its bid - the conference offered low-lying nations a \$30 billion "adaptation fund". (Two years later, that sum has risen to \$100 billion, most of which has yet to materialise.) And while Zubrycki then follows Tiimon to a subsequent climate-change conference in Cancun, the film assumes an air of inevitability.

Even Kiribati's President, Anote Tong, concedes that relocation is unavoidable and that all efforts must be made to ensure his people can "move with dignity".

**To find out more, or to purchase the DVD visit [thehungrytide.com.au](http://thehungrytide.com.au)**

# the HUNGRY tide



## Chauvel Cinema Special Screening

Friday August 5, 7pm

Paddington Town Hall  
(corn Oatley Rd & Oxford St)

No Bookings - Entry by donation  
Pre drinks from 6pm.

# Gladstone

At home with the  
Marist Spirit



By Sister Noreen Dunne

In the middle of January this year, the Marist family in the Diocese of Rockhampton was completed. The Marist fathers, Sisters, Brothers and Laity were joined by the Marist Missionary Sisters branch of the family. Sisters Margaret Gilbert and Noreen Dunne arrived in the parish of Gladstone on January 19th. They took up residence in the community gathered about the Church of St Peter Chanel in Tannum Sands.

Although the Marist Sisters and Brothers have their communities a great distance from Gladstone, they had both been ably represented there for many years. Fathers Paul Mahony and Bernie McFadgen who presently minister in the parish and made the sisters very welcome indeed. Soon after their arrival they were able to meet up with Mr Tony Warren a lay Marist who presented the two sisters with a statue of St Peter Chanel. It was very fitting because of the name of the church at Tannum Sands but also because the statue had been given to him previously by a Marist sister who worked in Gladstone. And so, as with all families, things go from hand to hand and connect all the members.

The parishioners at Tannum Sands seem imbued with the Marist Spirit and their welcome and hospitality have been truly remarkable. The sisters' first night in the house was extraordinary as people came and went, delivering and arranging furniture and bring the "makings" for a cuppa which all shared. This hospitality has continued. Already the parishioners have surfaced various needs within their community and Margaret and Noreen are finding ways to address those needs. The Marist family atmosphere has made an enormous difference to the sisters who are already feeling quite at home within the presence of the Marist Spirit.



# Prayer Intention

*Slow recovery from the death of our only son and other ongoing daily hardships (financial, health & other deaths) & sorrows...*

Dear Community of Prayer,

Thank you for praying!

Please if possible, can you include my wife and I in the daily prayers of the Community in the days ahead - 2011,12 - or as long as possible? Please pray with us for God's Healing, protecting peace and hope! Please feel free to pass or e-mail our prayer request on: Parishes, Convents, Retired Sisters, Monasteries, Abbeys and Other Communities (Women & Men) of Prayer that you know of in the World. We will keep you in our prayers!

In his Mercy,  
**Bill and Carol, USA**

# RIP

Sr Ann Weissmann smsm

Fr Michael Kaminei SM (PNG)

Tara Blaxland-Walker - (16 years of age - Kingsgrove)

William Charles Chapman - Father of Ray Chapman SM



## Marist Laity Australia

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**Coordinators** Margaret Woods & Andrew Dumas  
**Secretary** Val Norris  
**Treasurer** Margaret Walker

## The Last Word



*To assist in sharing the work load Andrew Dumas (Coordinator of MLA) and I will share writing for MLA across the year.*

*As new committee members take up their roles this year things will look different and change. Both Andrew and I work full time with family commitments and as such juggle many roles. We hope that many other members of Marist Laity Australia will help publish the MLA newsletters and contribute with articles that help keep us connected across Australia.*

*No matter how large or small your contribution is we really look forward to hearing from you. It's like sitting around a table, the conversation between the youngest and eldest can range from a two second comment to a full on conversation...let's hear from you!*

*We thank Nicole Lestal for her generosity in publishing our June edition. We look forward to hearing from you and the everyday life experiences that give the opportunity for Mary's spirit to be present in the world.*

**Margaret Woods**  
MLA Coordinator